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ETHIOPIA

Fighting between government forces and Eritrean insurgents was light over the weekend.

The ruling military council in Addis Ababa has adopted a more favorable attitude toward Sudanese President Numayri's peace proposal for Eritrea. [redacted]

[redacted] a government delegation will leave soon for Khartoum to hold discussions. The Ethiopians apparently are willing to talk with rebel representatives as well as with the Sudanese.

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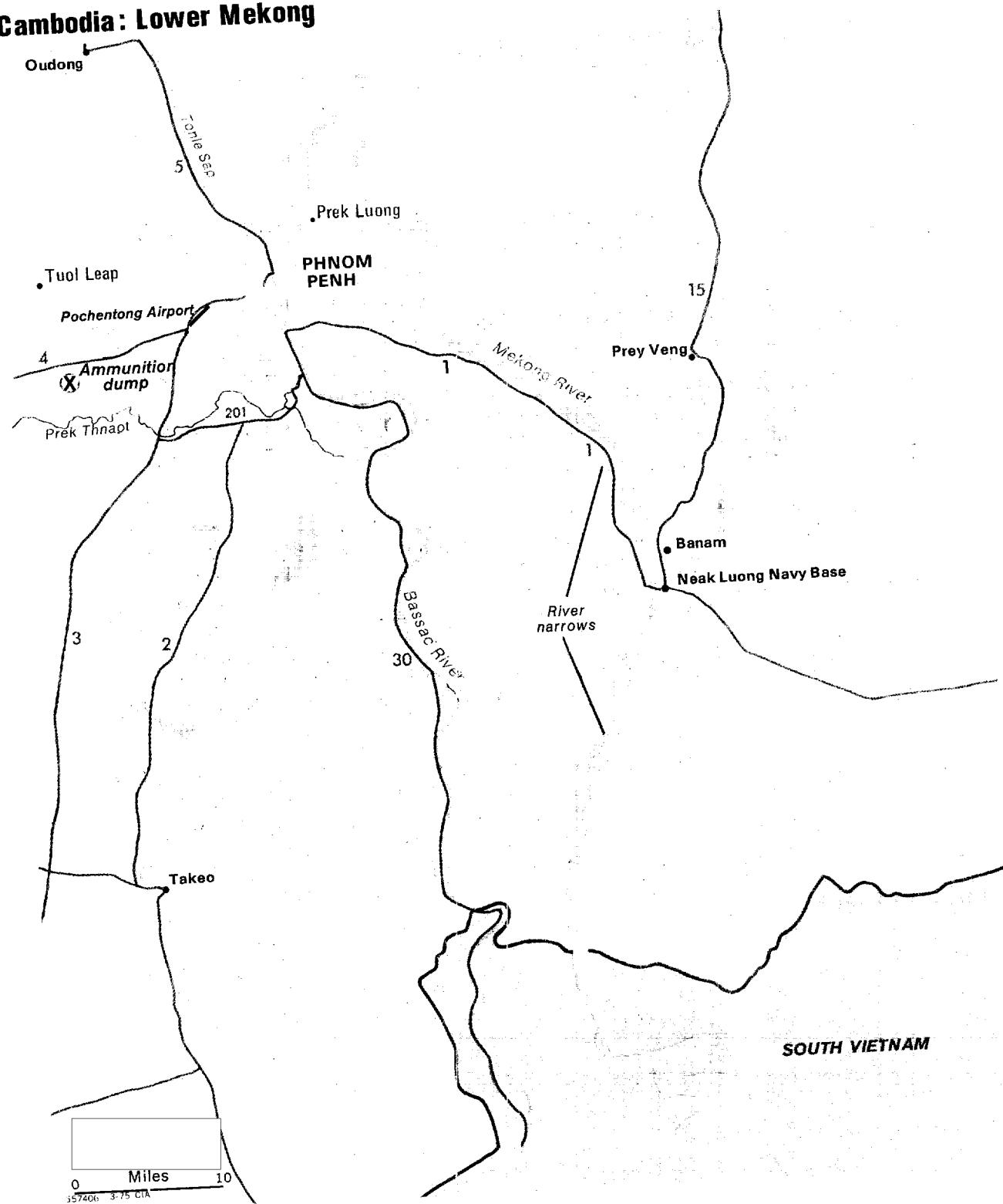
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Prospects for productive negotiations, nonetheless, remain slim. The Ethiopians probably envisage only preliminary discussions. Numayri has called for talks without preconditions, but the Ethiopians continue to insist that discussions must be within the framework of Ethiopian national unity. The rebels, for their part, are holding to their demand that the government first recognize Eritrea's right to independence before negotiations begin.

The council had until now reacted coolly to Numayri's three-week-old proposal because it believed acceptance would be taken as a sign of weakness. The government apparently believes its military position in Eritrea has improved enough to remove that consideration. [redacted]

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Cambodia: Lower Mekong

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CAMBODIA

Heavy fighting continues along the western approaches to Phnom Penh, and the airfield at Pochentong has been hit frequently by rockets.

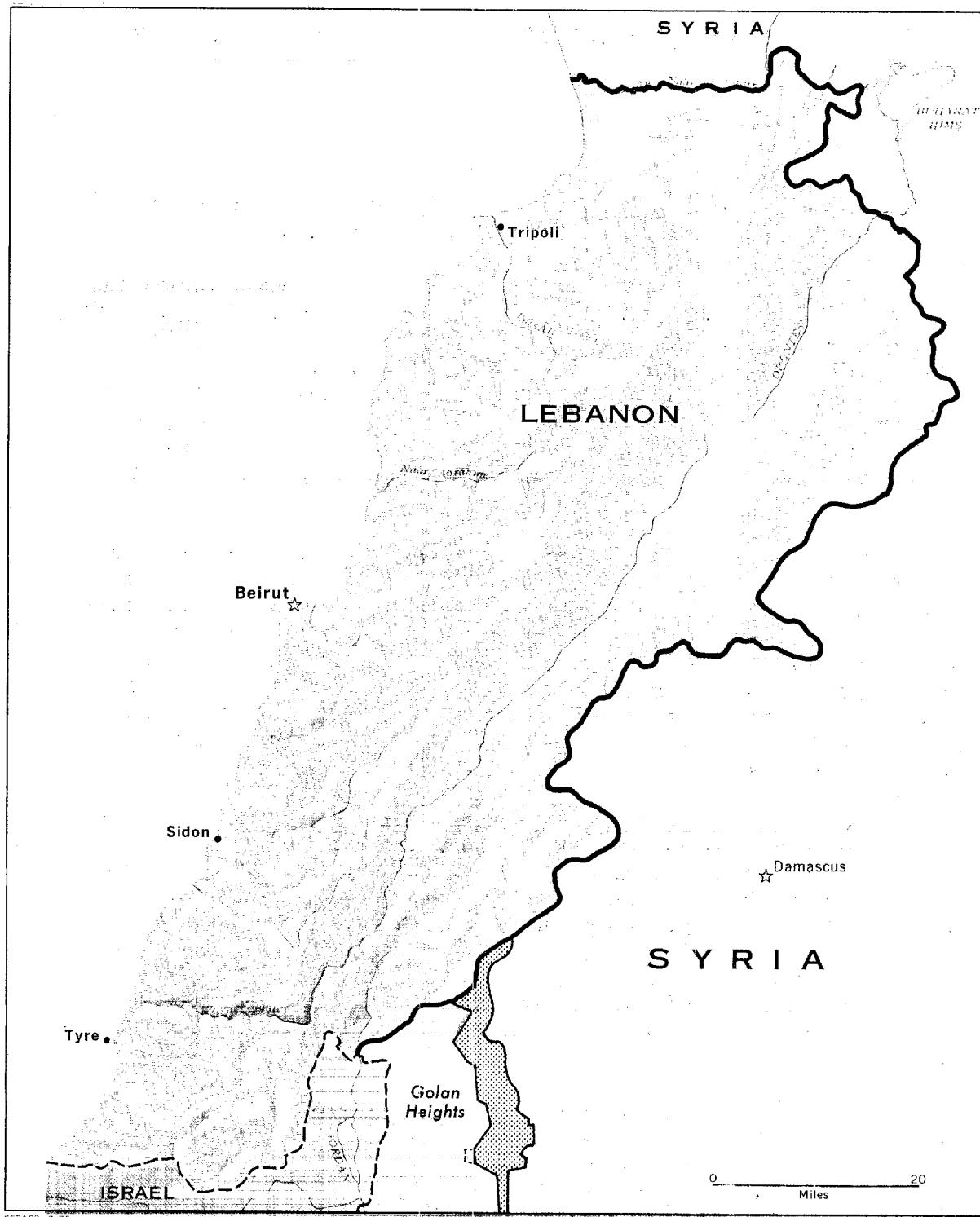
Government forces have been halted in their attempts to retake Tuol Leap, which fell on Friday, giving the insurgents control of key terrain northwest of a major government munitions depot. Government troops have encountered stiff resistance from a large, well-equipped enemy force at Tuol Leap. Renewed government efforts to retake the area are not expected to begin for a few days.

Southwest of Phnom Penh, government troops reached a unit of the 3rd Division that had been encircled and under heavy pressure since last week. Some 200 Communist dead were found in the immediate area. Attempts to link up with another cutoff position have been suspended, but operations are scheduled to resume today. The re-taking of these positions would free some units of the 3rd Division for operations against Communist units north of Route 4.

Along the Mekong, government forces are continuing clearing operations on a key island just north of Neak Luong. Meanwhile, Communist attacks against Neak Luong and Banam continue, and a friendly position southeast of Neak Luong reportedly has been abandoned. The loss of this position increases the Communist threat in the area and could curtail any reinforcement of the remaining government position near the southern narrows, which has come under intensified enemy attack over the past few days.

Communist attacks are expected to continue northeast of the capital, and additional territorial losses could occur unless badly needed supplies reach the remaining government positions. A naval resupply convoy was able to replenish dwindling ammunition stocks at two friendly positions last night; this should help shore up the government's sagging defenses.

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LEBANON

Clashes between Lebanese army units and leftist and fedayeen forces continued over the weekend in the southern port city of Sidon.

At least five soldiers have been killed and several army vehicles destroyed in the fighting, which grew out of a demonstration last Wednesday over fishing rights. Less serious shooting incidents have occurred in Tripoli and Tyre. A general strike called to protest the army's intervention has paralyzed the ports of Sidon and Tyre, but has been only partly effective in Beirut and Tripoli.

Prime Minister Sulh's four-month-old government has been severely shaken by the fighting. According to press reports, however, Sulh decided during the course of a long cabinet meeting yesterday to postpone any decision to step down. Two cabinet members have threatened to resign in protest over the army's actions in Sidon.

The army entered the dispute to halt the shooting that occurred when Lebanese leftists besieged Sidon's city hall last week. The army failed to restore order, however, and quickly became embroiled in a fight with fedayeen groups that sympathize and cooperate with local leftists. Sidon's medieval quarter is heavily populated by fedayeen, and the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon is just outside the city.

The demonstration last Wednesday may have been intended by radical fedayeen and leftists to draw the Lebanese army into the conflict and thus embarrass the more moderate leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who have reasonably good relations with the Lebanese government.

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Prime Minister Sulh, in an effort to ease the situation, told newsmen yesterday that he has appointed a new acting governor for southern Lebanon and that he would that day ask the army to withdraw from Sidon, "now that its mission has been completed." He was referring to the army's claim that it had regained control of major access routes to Sidon. Late yesterday, Sulh claimed that the situation in Sidon was normal.

Sulh has been consulting behind the scenes with Lebanese Socialist leader Kamal Jumblatt and with leaders of the PLO in the hope that they will prove better able to restrain the radicals. Both Jumblatt and the PLO leaders have lately been on good terms with the government, but they will take extreme care to avoid becoming identified with Sulh's position lest they alienate their generally anti-government supporters.

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EC-MEDITERRANEAN

The EC is moving ahead with its Mediterranean policy. It is preparing to conclude agreements with the Maghreb--the Arab states of the western Mediterranean--and to open negotiations with Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

The negotiations nearing conclusion provide Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco with preferential reductions in EC tariffs on industrial goods and agricultural imports. These agreements will include protocols on technical, financial, economic, and environmental cooperation.

In the new negotiations, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are seeking roughly similar agreements. They are asking for duty-free entry to the EC for all industrial products, some concessions on agricultural products, financial cooperation, protection for migrant labor, and the establishment of a joint committee with the EC to watch over relations between the two areas. Egypt, moreover, wants an EC office opened in Cairo.

At the same time, the EC is considering a supplementary protocol to a recently concluded agreement with Israel that would cover economic and financial cooperation. The protocol would include provision for a joint committee like that proposed for the eastern Mediterranean Arab states.

The French suggestion for a comprehensive EC policy in the Mediterranean--originally made in 1972--has been pushed during the past year, in part because the EC members have hoped the policy would help their relations with the oil-exporting states of the area. The current multilateral trade negotiations in Geneva also undoubtedly lend urgency to EC efforts to conclude new agreements, or renew older ones, in order to strengthen the EC's hand in dealing with the less-developed countries.

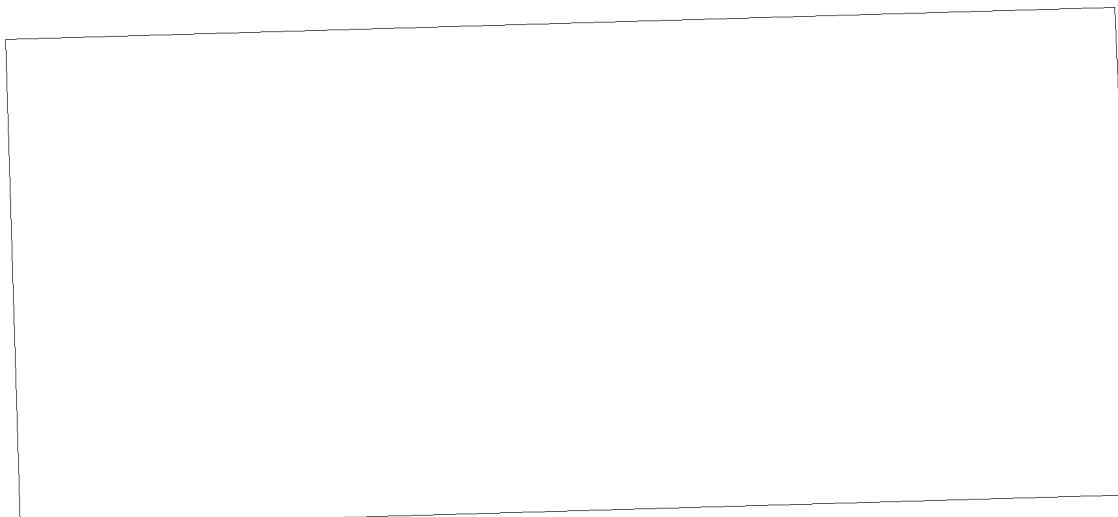
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FOR THE RECORD



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Turkey: Turkish President Koruturk has asked Prime Minister Irmak, who has headed the caretaker cabinet, to form a coalition government. Because of spreading civil disturbances, particularly in the eastern provinces, Koruturk has been under considerable pressure to break the political deadlock that has kept the country under interim rule for more than five months. Irmak was unsuccessful earlier when he tried to form a coalition. If he is able to form a government this time, it will be only temporary, until the political parties agree when to hold a new election.

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